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Elizabeth Montgomery

Elizabeth Victoria Montgomery (April 15, 1938 – May 18, 1995)^[2] was an American actress whose career spanned five decades in film, stage, and television. She portrayed the good witch Samantha Stephens on the popular television series *Bewitched*, which earned her five Primetime Emmy Award nominations and four Golden Globe Award nominations.

The daughter of actor, director and producer Robert Montgomery, she began her career in the 1950s with a role on her father's television series *Robert Montgomery Presents*, and she won a Theater World Award for her 1956 Broadway debut in the production *Late Love*. After *Bewitched* ended in 1972, Montgomery continued her career with roles in numerous television films, including: *A Case of Rape* (1974), as Ellen Harrod; and *The Legend of Lizzie Borden* (1975), as Lizzie Borden. Both roles earned her additional Emmy Award nominations.

Throughout her career, Montgomery was involved in various forms of political activism and charitable work.

Early life

Montgomery was born on April 15, 1938, in Los Angeles, California, to Broadway actress Elizabeth Daniel Bryan Allen and film star Robert Montgomery. Montgomery's mother was a native of Kentucky and her father was a native of New York. She had an elder sister who was born in 1931 and died in infancy, Martha Bryan Montgomery (named after her aunt Martha-Bryan Allen) and a younger brother, Robert B. Montgomery Jr.^[3] Montgomery was of Irish and Scottish descent. Her great-grandfather, Archibald Montgomery, was born in Belfast and he emigrated to the United States in 1849. Genealogical research which was conducted after her death revealed that she and Lizzie Borden, acquitted of the murder of her father and stepmother in 1893, were sixth cousins once removed, both of them were descended from 17th-century Massachusetts resident John Luther. Montgomery portrayed Borden in the television film *The Legend of Lizzie Borden* (1975), unaware that Borden was her distant cousin.^[3]

Elizabeth Montgomery



Montgomery circa 1967

Born	Elizabeth Victoria Montgomery April 15, 1938^[1] <u>Los Angeles, California</u>, <u>U.S.</u>
Died	May 18, 1995 (aged 62)^[2] <u>Beverly Hills, California</u>, <u>U.S.</u>
Alma mater	<u>American Academy of Dramatic Arts</u>
Occupation	Actress
Years active	1951–1995
Known for	<u>Samantha Stephens</u> on <i><u>Bewitched</u></i>
Spouses	Frederick Gallatin Cammann (m. 1954; div. 1955) Gig Young (m. 1956; div. 1963) William Asher (m. 1963; div. 1973)

After attending the Westlake School for Girls in Holmby Hills, California,^[4] Montgomery graduated from the Spence School in New York City. She studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in Manhattan for three years.^[5]

Career

1951–1963: Early work

Montgomery made her television debut in her father's series *Robert Montgomery Presents* and on later occasions, she appeared as a member of his "summer stock" company of performers. In October 1953, Montgomery made her Broadway debut, starring in *Late Love*,^[6] for which she won a Theater World Award for her performance.^[5] She then made her film debut in Otto Preminger's *The Court-Martial of Billy Mitchell* (1955). Montgomery returned to Broadway in 1956, appearing in *The Loud Red Patrick*.^[6]

Montgomery's early career consisted of starring roles and appearances in live television dramas and series, such as *Studio One*, *Kraft Television Theater*, *Johnny Staccato*, *Burke's Law*, *The Twilight Zone*, *The Eleventh Hour*, *Wagon Train*, *Boris Karloff's Thriller*, and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*.^[5] Montgomery was nominated at the 13th Primetime Emmy Awards for her portrayal of southern nightclub performer Rusty Heller in a 1960 episode of *The Untouchables*, playing opposite David White, who later portrayed Larry Tate on *Bewitched*.^[7] She played the part of Rose Cornelius in the *Rawhide* episode "Incident at El Crucero" (1963).^[8]

Montgomery was featured in a role as a socialite who falls for a gangster (Henry Silva) in *Johnny Cool* (1963), directed by William Asher, and the film comedy *Who's Been Sleeping in My Bed?* (also 1963), with Dean Martin and Carol Burnett, this time directed by Daniel Mann. After her appearance on *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, Alfred Hitchcock had her in mind to play the sister-in-law of Sean Connery, who sees herself as a rival to the troubled heroine in the film *Marnie* (1964), but Montgomery was unavailable.^[9]

1964–1972: *Bewitched*

In the ABC situation comedy *Bewitched*, Montgomery played the central role of lovable witch Samantha Stephens, with Dick York (and later with Dick Sargent) as her husband. Starting in the second season of the series, she also played the role of Samantha's mischievous cousin, Serena, under the pseudonym Pandora Spocks (a pun on Pandora's Box).

Bewitched became a ratings success (it was, at the time, the highest-rated series ever for the network).^[10] The series aired for eight seasons, from 1964 to 1972, and Montgomery received five Emmy^[11] and four Golden Globe nominations for her role on *Bewitched*. Despite low ratings late in the series run, it was renewed for a ninth season to run from fall 1972. However, Montgomery's marriage to *Bewitched* director William Asher was failing and the couple had separated by the end of the eighth season.



Bewitched co-stars Dick York, Agnes Moorehead, and Montgomery

	<u>Robert Foxworth</u> (m. 1993)
Children	3
Parents	<u>Robert Montgomery</u> (father) <u>Elizabeth Bryan Allen</u> (mother)
Relatives	<u>Martha-Bryan Allen</u> (aunt)

This situation caused severe friction in their professional relationship and it also ended any possibility of another season. As a consolation to ABC, Montgomery and Asher (under their company name Ashmont, which produced *Bewitched*) offered a half-hour sitcom, *The Paul Lynde Show*, to the network for the 1972–1973 season. Lynde's series only lasted one year.

In a parody of her Samantha Stephens role, she made a cameo appearance as a witch at the end of the beach party film *How to Stuff a Wild Bikini* (1965). The film was directed by Asher, her husband at the time. That same year she also provided the voice of Samantha for an episode of the animated series *The Flintstones*.

1973–1995: Later career

Montgomery returned to Samantha-like twitching of her nose and on-screen magic in a series of Japanese television commercials (1980–83) for "Mother" chocolate biscuits and cookies which were produced by the confectionery conglomerate Lotte Corp. These Japanese commercials provided a substantial salary for Montgomery while she remained out of sight of non-Japanese fans and the Hollywood industry.

In the United States, Montgomery spent much of her later career pursuing dramatic roles that took her as far away from the good-natured Samantha as possible. Among her later roles were performances that brought her Emmy Award nominations: a rape victim in *A Case of Rape* (1974), and the accused (but acquitted) murderer Lizzie Borden in William Bast's *The Legend of Lizzie Borden* (1975). After the actress died, Rhonda McClure, a genealogist, discovered that Montgomery and Borden were distant cousins.^[3]

Montgomery made many appearances on the game show *Password*. Allen Ludden, the show's longtime host, called her the "Queen of Password".^[12] Montgomery later played a pioneer woman facing hardship in 1820s Ohio in the miniseries *The Awakening Land* (1978), for which she earned her ninth Emmy nomination.

In *A Killing Affair* (1977), Montgomery played the role of a police detective who has an affair with her married partner, played by O. J. Simpson. In the television film *Amos* (1985), she played a rare villainous role, as a vicious nurse who abuses her wards in a home for senior citizens. The wards are played by Kirk Douglas and Dorothy McGuire, among others. In 1989, Montgomery returned to Broadway one last time in a production of *Love Letters*, opposite Robert Foxworth.^[6] She played one of her last roles in an episode of *Batman: The Animated Series* entitled "Showdown", in which she played a barmaid; this was also her final work to be screened, since the episode aired posthumously. Her last television series was the highly rated Edna Buchanan detective series – the second and final film of the series received its first airing on May 9, 1995,^[13] only nine days before Montgomery died.



Montgomery (right) and Katherine Helmond as Emma and Lizzie Borden, February 1975

Personal life

In 1954, Montgomery married New York City socialite Frederick Gallatin Cammann;^[14] the couple divorced less than a year later. She was married to Academy Award winning actor Gig Young from 1956 to 1963 and then she was married to director-producer William Asher from 1963 until their divorce in 1973.^[14] They had three children: William, Robert and Rebecca. The latter two pregnancies were incorporated into *Bewitched* as Samantha's pregnancies. During the eighth year of the show, Montgomery

fell in love with director Richard Michaels. Their resulting affair led to the end of both of their marriages, as well as the end of the series. They moved in together when shooting ended in 1972; the relationship lasted two and a half years. On January 28, 1993, she married actor Robert Foxworth, after living with him for nearly twenty years. They remained married until her death in 1995.^[2]

According to author Herbie J Pilato, Montgomery had an affair with Alexander Godunov while she was living with Foxworth but was not yet married to him.^{[15][16]} Godunov was found dead on May 18, 1995, the day Montgomery died,^[17] but it is believed that he died several days before Montgomery.^[18]

Throughout the run of *Bewitched*, many references to Patterson, New York, were made on the series. The Putnam County town was the site of the Montgomery homestead, and it was also the place where she spent her childhood summers. In later years, her mother lived in the family farmhouse on Cushman Road.^[19]

Political activism

Montgomery was personally devoted to liberal political causes, and she lent her name, along with a large amount of her time, money, and energy, to a wide variety of charitable and political causes.^[20] She was a champion of women's rights, AIDS activism, and gay rights.^[21] She was also an ardent critic of the Vietnam War, and in later years, she was an active advocate for AIDS research and outreach to the disabled community.^[20] Professionally, she lent her voice as the narrator of two political documentaries which were critical of U.S. foreign policy, *Cover Up: Behind the Iran Contra Affair* (1988) and its Academy Award-winning sequel *The Panama Deception* (1992).^[22] In June 1992, Montgomery and Dick Sargent, her former *Bewitched* co-star as well as her good friend, were grand marshals at the Los Angeles Gay Pride Parade.^[11]

Charitable work

During the last year of her life, Montgomery was a volunteer at the Los Angeles Unit of Learning Ally, a nonprofit organization which records educational books on specially formatted CDs as well as in downloadable formats for disabled people.^[23] In 1994, Montgomery produced several radio and television public-service announcements for Learning Ally's Los Angeles unit.^[23] In January 1995, she recorded the 1952 edition of the best-selling book of poetry titled When We Were Very Young by A. A. Milne for Learning Ally.^[24]

On June 3, 1995, sixteen days after her death, Learning Ally's Los Angeles unit dedicated its 1995 Record-A-Thon to Montgomery and it also secured 21 celebrities to assist in the recording of the book titled Chicken Soup for the Soul, which was also dedicated to her memory.^[24]

Illness and death

For several months before her death, Montgomery had struggled with cancer.^[25] She had ignored the influenza-like symptoms during the filming of *Deadline for Murder: From the Files of Edna Buchanan*, which she finished filming in late March 1995. By the time the cancer was diagnosed, it had metastasized from her colon to her liver, so it was too late for medical intervention.^[26]

With no hope of recovery and unwilling to die in a hospital, she chose to return to the Beverly Hills home that she shared with Foxworth. At 8:22 a.m. Pacific time on the morning of May 18, 1995, Montgomery died in her sleep at home, eight weeks after her diagnosis;^[11] she was 62 years old.

On June 18, 1995, one month after her death, a memorial service was held at the Canon Theatre in Beverly Hills. Herbie Hancock played music, and Dominick Dunne spoke about the early years of their friendship when both of them lived in New York City. Other speakers included her widower, Robert Foxworth, who read sympathy cards which were sent to him by fans, her nurse, her brother, her daughter, and her stepson. Her body was cremated at the Westwood Village Memorial Park Cemetery.

Montgomery kept her parents' home in Patterson, Putnam County, New York. After her death, the estate was sold and then it became a part of Wonder Lake State Park.^[27]

Legacy

- On April 19, 1998, Montgomery's family held an auction and a sale of her clothing in order to benefit the AIDS Healthcare Foundation of Los Angeles. Erin Murphy, who played Tabitha on the *Bewitched* television series, modeled the clothing that was auctioned.^[28]
- In June 2005, a bronze statue of Montgomery as Samantha Stephens was erected in Salem, Massachusetts.^[29]



Bronze statue of Montgomery as Samantha Stevens
(Salem, Massachusetts)

- A star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame was presented in honor of Montgomery's work on television on January 4, 2008.^[30] The location of the star is 6533 Hollywood Blvd.

Filmography

Film

Year	Title	Role	Notes
1955	<i><u>The Court-Martial of Billy Mitchell</u></i>	Margaret Lansdowne	
1958	<i><u>Bitter Heritage</u></i>	Mary Brecker	Television film
1960	<i><u>Bells Are Ringing</u></i>	Girl reading book	Uncredited
1961	<i><u>The Spiral Staircase</u></i>	Helen Warren	Television film
1963	<i><u>Boston Terrier</u></i>	Millie Curtain	
	<i><u>Johnny Cool</u></i>	Darien "Dare" Guinness	
	<i><u>Who's Been Sleeping in My Bed?</u></i>	Melissa Morris	
1964	<i><u>Bikini Beach</u></i>	Lady Bug	Voice, uncredited
1965	<i><u>How to Stuff a Wild Bikini</u></i>	Bwana's Daughter, The Witches Witch	Uncredited
1972	<i><u>The Victim</u></i>	Kate Wainwright	Television film
1973	<i><u>Mrs. Sundance</u></i>	<u>Etta Place</u>	
1974	<i><u>A Case of Rape</u></i>	Ellen Harrod	Television film Nominated - <u>Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actress - Drama Series</u>
1975	<i><u>The Legend of Lizzie Borden</u></i>	<u>Lizzie Borden</u>	Television film Nominated - <u>Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Special Program - Drama or Comedy</u>
1976	<i><u>Dark Victory</u></i>	Katherine Merrill	Television film
1977	<i><u>A Killing Affair</u></i>	Vikki Eaton	
1978	<i><u>The Awakening Land</u></i>	Sayward Luckett Wheeler	Miniseries Nominated - <u>Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Limited Series</u>
1979	<i><u>Jennifer: A Woman's Story</u></i>	Jennifer Prince	Television film
	<i><u>Act of Violence</u></i>	Catherine McSweeney	
1980	<i><u>Belle Starr</u></i>	<u>Belle Starr</u>	
1981	<i><u>When the Circus Came to Town</u></i>	Mary Flynn	
1982	<i><u>The Rules of Marriage</u></i>	Joan Hagen	
1983	<i><u>Missing Pieces</u></i>	Sara Scott	
1984	<i><u>Second Sight: A Love Story</u></i>	Alaxandra McKay	

	<u>Amos</u>	Daisy Daws	
1985	<i>Between the Darkness and the Dawn</i>	Abigail Foster	
1988	<i>Coverup: Behind the Iran Contra Affair</i>	Narrator	Documentary film
1990	<i>Face to Face</i>	Dr. Diana Firestone	Television film
1991	<i>Sins of the Mother</i>	Ruth Coe	Television film
1992	<i>With Murder in Mind</i>	Gayle Wolfer	Television film
	<u><i>The Panama Deception</i></u>	Narrator	Documentary film
1993	<u><i>Black Widow Murders: The Blanche Taylor Moore Story</i></u>	<u>Blanche Taylor Moore</u>	
1994	<u><i>The Corpse Had a Familiar Face</i></u>	<u>Edna Buchanan</u>	Television film
1995	<i>Deadline for Murder: From the Files of Edna Buchanan</i>	Edna Buchanan	

Television

Year	Title	Role	Notes
1951–1956	<u><i>Robert Montgomery Presents</i></u>	Various roles	30 episodes
1953–1954	<u><i>Armstrong Circle Theatre</i></u>	Ellen Craig	2 episodes
1954–1957	<u><i>Kraft Television Theatre</i></u>	Various roles	7 episodes
1955–1956	<i>Appointment with Adventure</i>		2 episodes
1955–1958	<u><i>Studio One</i></u>	Various roles	3 episodes
1956	<u><i>Warner Bros. Presents</i></u>	Laura Woodruff	Episode: "Siege"
	<u><i>Climax!</i></u>	Betsy	Episode: "The Shadow of Evil"
1958	<u><i>Playhouse 90</i></u>	Mary Brecker	Episode: " <u>Bitter Heritage</u> "
	<u><i>Suspicion</i></u>	Ellen	Episode: "The Velvet Vault"
	<u><i>DuPont Show of the Month</i></u>	Miss Kelly	Episode: "Harvey"
	<u><i>Cimarron City</i></u>	Ellen Wilson	Episode: "Hired Hand"
	<u><i>Alfred Hitchcock Presents</i></u>	Karen	Episode: "Man with a Problem"
1959	<u><i>The Loretta Young Show</i></u>	Millie	Episode: "Marriage Crisis"
	<u><i>The Third Man</i></u>	Lorraine	Episode: "A Man Take a Trip"
	<u><i>Riverboat</i></u>	Abigail Carruthers	Episode: "The Barrier"
	<u><i>Johnny Staccato</i></u>	Fay Linn	Episode: "Tempted"

1960	<u>Wagon Train</u>	Julie Crail	Episode: "The Vittorio Bottecelli Story"
	<u>The Tab Hunter Show</u>	Hilary Fairfield	Episode: "For Money or Love"
	<u>One Step Beyond</u>	Lillie Clarke	Episode: "The Death Waltz"
1960	<u>The Untouchables</u>	Rusty Heller	Episode: "The Rusty Heller Story" Nominated - Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Single Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role
	<u>The Twilight Zone</u>	The Woman	Episode: " <u>Two</u> "
1961	<u>Thriller</u>	Rosamond "Ros" Denham	Episode: "Masquerade"
	<u>Frontier Circus</u>	Karina Andrews	Episode: "Karina"
1962	<u>Checkmate</u>	Vicki Page	Episode: "The Star System"
	<u>Alcoa Premiere</u>	Iris Hecate	Episode: "Mr. Lucifer"
	<u>Saints and Sinners</u>	Eadie Donelli	Episode: "The Homecoming Bit"
1963	<u>Rawhide</u>	Rose Cornelius	Episode: "Incident at El Crucero"
	<u>77 Sunset Strip</u>	Charlotte Delaville	Episode: "White Lie"
1963–1964	<u>The Eleventh Hour</u>	Polly Saunders	Episode: "The Bronze Locust"
	<u>Burke's Law</u>	Various roles	2 episodes
1964–1972	<u>Bewitched</u>	Samantha Stephens (and Serena)	254 episodes Nominated - Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actress – Comedy Series (1966-1970) Nominated - Golden Globe Award for Best TV Star (Female) (1965, 1967 & 1969)
1965	<u>The Flintstones</u>	Samantha Stephens	Voice, episode: "Samantha"
1965–1975	<u>Password</u>	Herself	88 episodes Game Show Participant / Celebrity Guest Star
1968	<u>The Carol Burnett Show</u>	Herself	In the audience with William Asher
1979	<u>Password Plus</u>		Game Show Participant / Celebrity Guest Star
1995	<u>Batman: The Animated Series</u>	Barmaid	Voice, episode: "Showdown" (posthumously released)

Stage credits

Year	Title	Role	Notes
1953–1954	<u>Late Love</u>	Janet Colby	<u>Theater World Award</u> for Best Actress
1956	<u>The Loud Red Patrick</u>	Maggie Flannigan	
1974	<u>28th Tony Awards</u>	Herself	
1989–1990	<u>Love Letters</u>	Melissa Gardner	

Narration work

- The Panama Deception (1992)
- Craven Street: Ben Franklin in London, a five-part radio drama (1993)
- Beauty's Punishment (1994)
- Beauty's Release (1994)

Television coverage

- In 1998, the A&E Television Network produced a documentary for its *Biography* television series about the life and career of Elizabeth Montgomery. The documentary first aired on A&E on February 15, 1999.
- In 1999, the E! cable channel produced a documentary for its *E! The True Hollywood Story* series titled "Bewitched: The E! True Hollywood Story." The documentary first aired on E! on August 22, 1999.

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External links

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 - Elizabeth Montgomery (https://web.archive.org/web/*/https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/person/134329%7C*) at the TCM Movie Database
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